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New York

Chairman: Mr. Jarmo Sareva ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda items 62 to 80 (*continued*)

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

Mr. Niang (Senegal) *(spoke in French)*: I am pleased to join previous speakers in conveying our delegation's sincere congratulations to you, Mr. Chairman, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. I would also like to congratulate the other members of the Bureau and to assure you of the full cooperation of the delegation of Senegal in carrying out the important mission entrusted to you. We also warmly congratulate Ambassador Nobuyasu Abe, to whom we wish great success in his lofty position as Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs.

We are truly living in a dangerous world, where the proliferation of weapons of all sizes and types has reached worrisome levels and where the resurgence of the viper of terrorism once again poses a challenge to the entire international community. At a time when humankind is threatened more than ever before and when there is a need to join efforts to avert those dangers, we stand powerless before a crisis in the disarmament process. That crisis is evidenced by the failure in the work of the Disarmament Commission and the great uncertainties looming over the programme of work of the Conference on Disarmament. That situation stems from the adherence to a narrow and selfish logic that makes the possession of weapons of mass destruction a political and diplomatic advantage. It is high time for our troubled world to be guided by the healthy conviction that security is either comprehensive or non-existent. It is also time to begin to foster a frank and direct dialogue on all issues related to disarmament and international security.

Like many other delegations, Senegal believes that the increased dangers in the area of disarmament makes it necessary for us to examine our working methods anew, both within the First Committee and in other forums dealing with the issue of disarmament. The delegation of Senegal also believes that the First Committee should focus on weighty basic issues and, along those lines, consider the biennialization or triennialization of certain resolutions under its purview.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), a cornerstone of the international regime for nuclear non-proliferation, is still far from meeting all the desired results agreed upon at the 2000 Review Conference. More than ever before, the universality of the NPT must continue to be a priority, just as the criteria for its verification and irreversibility should be rigorously adhered to. Senegal urges all States that are not yet parties to the NPT to accede to that Treaty as soon as possible. Similarly, my delegation calls for greater accession to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We welcome the fact that many States that are not parties to the CTBT have nevertheless decided to observe a moratorium on nuclear tests.

We praise the results achieved by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons,

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including its important work in verifying and destroying stocks and its initiative to implement a programme of action on behalf of the African continent.

As for biological weapons, my delegation hopes that the current consultation process on strengthening the Biological Weapons Convention will lead to the adoption of effective, beneficial measures.

I cannot conclude without referring to the destruction caused in Africa, in particular, by anti-personnel mines and small arms and light weapons. With regard to anti-personnel mines, I welcome the valuable support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which has provided many countries with training and has strengthened the management of the socio-economic impact of landmines. My country fully endorses the United Nations mine action strategy for 2001 to 2005, which was clearly set forth by the Secretary-General in his report (A/56/448/Add.1) of 16 October 2001.

Small arms and light weapons, which have both a social and economic impact, continue to be a serious threat to the integrity of many African countries. West African heads of State adopted a few years ago a Moratorium on light weapons, followed by a Code of Conduct, which receives valuable support from UNDP's Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED). In addition, national commissions that have been elevated to the subregional level to help communities fight against the proliferation of these deadly devices. My delegation calls for support for the draft resolution on assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and collecting them, which will be submitted by Mali on behalf of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

Mrs. Bonilla Galvão de Queiroz (Guatemala) *(spoke in Spanish)*: First, Sir, I congratulate you on your election to chair the Committee during this session. I also congratulate the other members of the Bureau.

We thank the representative of Peru for his detailed statement on behalf of the Rio Group, which we endorse. My delegation, nevertheless, wishes to present some additional reflections on certain issues that we consider relevant, as well as on the overall disarmament and international security situation. We shall, however, refrain from listing points that we all know are priorities on our agenda, nor shall we stress that much still remains to be done.

We find ourselves in a special situation, in that we all share an identical concern, arising from the need to respond to new challenges to international security. As the Secretary-General has observed, it may be that we face not new threats, but, rather, old ones in new and dangerous combinations. Even though new ideas have emerged for confronting these threats, we cannot deny that our final objective, which is to combat them, remains unchanged. That in itself is a step forward in our struggle.

Moreover, we are not starting from scratch. We are all part of one single Organization; we have international instruments at our disposal; we have accepted international law and the rule of law; and, particularly in the area assigned to us, we have available a wide range of disarmament agreements already concluded. We do not need, therefore, to reinvent the wheel. Let us, rather, endeavour with greater vigour to attain the goals that we have already set ourselves in our Organization.

The Committee's work has not remained to the leeward of the winds of reform blowing in the United Nations. We appear to be facing a re-evaluation of our methods and effectiveness. The nature of our Committee should not be changed, since it is the most representative international forum in the area of disarmament and international security. It can, however, be strengthened.

Consequently, bearing in mind that international security demands immediate attention, we should avoid being bogged down in an interminable series of discussions on procedure. Our main focus should be on the quest for the best way to breathe life into the resolutions that are within the Committee's purview. As I have already observed, the nub of the matter is their implementation. We should begin, in the atmosphere of restructuring or revitalizing, to revive our international disarmament mechanism, remembering the benefits of effective collective action, because strengthening the work of the First Committee is intrinsically bound up with the strengthening of multilateralism.

We consider that the problems of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation, as well as the promotion of adequate implementation of the existing disarmament regimes, can be addressed only through truly effective multilateralism, which includes strict observance of existing international legal instruments. Interdependence in international security requires that our action be based on the preponderant role of the United Nations.

Before concluding, I wish to comment briefly on two specific matters of special concern to my delegation. First, we reaffirm our commitment to implement both the Programme of Action adopted by the Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. We welcome the measures to that end taken at the last two meetings on implementation, held in New York and Bangkok, and continue to take steps for national implementation.

Secondly, we stress that we have been complementing our national efforts by subregional initiatives. At the Central American level, we have taken measures in accordance with the Framework Treaty on Democratic Security in Central America. Through the consultation and evaluation mechanisms provided for in the treaty, we are coordinating actions to limit and control armaments in the region. In this respect, I wish to highlight the Agreement for Regional Security, adopted last month at a meeting of the Central American Security Commission, involving a comprehensive programme to limit armaments and promote stability, mutual confidence, transparency and the means to prevent arms from coming into the hands of armed groups operating outside the law.

Finally, we associate ourselves with the appeal to all delegations to intensify their efforts and end the stagnation of the disarmament machinery, thus fulfilling the commitment of some countries to disarm and of others to renounce the possession of arms. Our Committee is the only body that can issue a clear and principled message that, with full respect for the disarmament commitments already assumed, the corresponding undertakings must be strictly observed, and, that their universal observance is the cornerstone of international peace and security.

Mr. Labbe (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): As this is the first our delegation has taken the floor at this session, let me express to you, Mr. Chairman, our country's congratulations on your election — congratulations that extend to all other members of the Bureau. You can count on our full support in carrying out your important mandate. We are sure that the Committee, under your worthy leadership, will achieve the results that circumstances permit.

I am pleased to take the floor in the general debate of the First Committee at the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly on behalf of the 109 States signatory to the International Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation, also called the Hague Code of Conduct. The Hague Code of Conduct — a political instrument to which I shall refer henceforth as the Code — was opened for signature in the capital of the Netherlands on 25 November 2002 after a discussion and negotiation process open to participation by all States concerned by the proliferation of ballistic missiles capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction. The Code's text, which was transmitted to the Secretary-General in a letter dated 30 January 2003 from the Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, has been officially circulated as a document of the General Assembly (A/57/724) under item 66 of the agenda of the fifty-seventh session. The States signatory to the Code, based on their full commitment to the Charter of the United Nations, have pledged to confront security challenges that are leading to — in addition to other phenomena — the ongoing proliferation of ballistic missiles capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction.

The Code is a normative benchmark of a political nature, not an international treaty. The obligations that it sets forth — which are politically binding — are designed to strengthen and contribute to the universalization of all multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation instruments and mechanisms. We are convinced that adherence to and full compliance with the norms of international disarmament law are essential to building a global environment of confidence.

Thus we, the States signatory to the Code, which is open to all members of the international community wishing to subscribe to it, seek to promote the security of all States by creating mutual confidence through political and diplomatic means. Our objective is to contain and prevent — at the regional and global levels, through multilateral, bilateral and national efforts — proliferation of ballistic missiles capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction.

I want to emphasize that we are a group with a clearly multilateral vocation: among us are States representing all continents and all the regional groups recognized within the United Nations system. Developed and developing nations of the North and the South work shoulder to shoulder in the Code. Of the

109 signatory States, 47 are members or observers of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, which fact demonstrates the Code's cross-cutting nature.

As a point of departure, we have sought to restrict as much as possible the development, testing and use of ballistic missiles capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction. That also includes — to the extent possible — reducing national holdings of such missiles to promote international peace and security. In addition, we have pledged to take the necessary care to ensure that technical assistance and cooperation do not contribute — even inadvertently — to progress in missile programmes associated with the development of weapons of mass destruction. But that is without prejudice to confirmation of our commitment to the United Nations Declaration on International Cooperation in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space for the Benefit and in the Interest of All States, Taking into Particular Account the Needs of Developing Countries, adopted by the General Assembly through its resolution 51/122 of 13 December 1996. Likewise, we have recognized that States must not be excluded from access to the benefits of space for peaceful purposes.

Finally, we have resolved to implement transparency and confidence-building measures providing information on signatory States' programmes relating to ballistic missiles and expendable space launch vehicles. Such confidence-building measures do not exclude those that have already entered into force between signatory States or those that such States may develop or promote at the regional or bilateral level.

The Code held its second regular meeting of signatory States in New York on 2 and 3 October, in parallel with the commencement of the First Committee's work. During that meeting, we noted with satisfaction our membership's expansion and continued to debate the standardization and qualitative improvement of annual declarations and prior notification of launches of ballistic missiles and space launch vehicles. Moreover, we agreed on a mechanism for the timely circulation of communications related to confidence-building measures. Thus, we are in a phase of gradual development of our political tools, criteria of flexibility chief among them.

Less than a year after it came into existence, the Code is a concrete, living and growing reality with confidence-building measures under way; with a secretariat — our centre for immediate contact — functioning in Vienna; and with a range of promotion and dissemination activities under development. The most recent of those was the outreach seminar organized last week in New York by the outgoing chairmanship, which made possible a useful discussion on the contribution that the Code will make to disarmament achievements.

The Hague Code of Conduct is a normative political response to the threat posed by the proliferation of ballistic missiles capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction. However, it is not the only possible response and, as a political instrument, can coexist perfectly with other multilateral initiatives and mechanisms having the same objective. In relating the progress of our activities to the General Assembly, we are motivated both by a spirit of transparency and by the desire to see the greatest possible number of States among our ranks. All those who are genuinely committed to the cause of international peace and security have a natural place among us.

Mr. Memy (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): My delegation joins previous speakers in paying tribute to you, Sir, as well as to the other members of the Bureau, on your election.

At the outset, I wish to state that the illicit circulation of and trafficking in small arms is a matter of grave concern to the Government and people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

As everyone knows, my country is now healing the wounds of a long war, which lasted for more than five years and claimed nearly 4 million victims. Of this war and its dire effects on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, declared at a high-level meeting on 25 September 2003:

> "The Congolese people have experienced one of the bloodiest conflicts in modern history, a conflict in which the entire region has been involved. Millions have been killed or brutalized. In parts of the country, millions still live a precarious existence."

Stemming from that, we need to realize that this bloody war was fostered and fuelled by the proliferation and illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo noted this with bitterness in its report to the Secretary-General in the framework of the Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to

Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

It is important to emphasize that the Democratic Republic of the Congo supports the appeal made at the Biennial Meeting in New York for practical measures for the collection and the destruction of weapons; the marking and tracing of all small arms; the preparation of a joint strategy on the norms and criteria to combat terrorism and organized crime; the adoption, at the international level, of a law enforcement instrument; and so forth.

The approach adopted by the Democratic Republic of the Congo is based on the fact that the recurrence of armed conflicts is the result of the uncontrolled presence of small arms. More than 100,000 weapons are in circulation in Congolese territory. In order to better coordinate the fight against this scourge, my country has established a National Commission to fight the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons. Its tasks are: coordinating, as a focal point, all issues relating to small arms and light weapons, as well as all partnership with, and support from, the national and international community in the framework of the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme; implementation of the Programme of Action of the United Nations Conference on small arms and light weapons; mobilization of international aid, expertise, assistance and cooperation; codification of legislative texts related to small arms and light weapons; and evaluation of the Nairobi Declaration on the Problem of the Proliferation of Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa.

In that context, bearing in mind the establishment of the general staff of the new structured and integrated army, the Government, through the National Commission, intends to organize a seminar to raise collective awareness of the circulation of small arms and the way in which countries should respond to the objectives of the New York conference. This important seminar should also allow countries to mobilize non-governmental organizations and other actors concerned with the problem of the proliferation and illicit trade in small arms.

So that that important seminar may succeed, the Democratic Republic of the Congo appeals to the Secretary-General and the United Nations Development Programme to assist in this substantial undertaking. On behalf of my delegation, I express my country's gratitude for the assistance given by all donors working, in the context of the Secretariat of the Nairobi Declaration, on questions related to the proliferation and illicit circulation of arms in the Great Lakes region and Horn of Africa.

My delegation feels that controlling the circulation of small arms is one way to strengthen the current efforts of the Transitional Government to reunify the national territory, pacify the country, rebuild the infrastructure and restore State authority, which should lead to the holding of free and transparent elections.

My delegation shares the concerns expressed by various delegations about nuclear weapons and terrorism. The Democratic Republic of the Congo firmly condemns all acts of terrorism, which have left our community in mourning, and reiterates its commitment to cooperate with all the countries of our Organization to fight terrorism.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo's subsoil is rich in many minerals, some considered to be strategic. During the long years of war, part of Congolese territory was under the control of forces of aggression that supported plundering, exploitation and uncontrolled trade in these natural resources. There is cause for concern about the consequences and damage stemming from those acts, such as abusive use of those resources for terrorist purposes. My delegation therefore urges the international community to support the current peace efforts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to help the established authorities secure our national borders, thus ending the illegal exploitation of the wealth of our country. That would guarantee lasting peace in our Great Lakes region and the Horn of Africa — and why not Africa and the entire world?

Mr. Issa (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me, Sir, at the outset to express my sincere congratulations on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. We are confident that you will guide our work to a successful outcome given the outstanding reputation that precedes you.

My congratulations go also to Mr. Nobuyasu Abe, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs. We are confident that his expertise and objectivity will contribute to enriching the activities and the work of the First Committee. On behalf of the delegation of Egypt, I would also like to pay tribute to his

predecessor as Under-Secretary-General, Jayantha Dhanapala, for his stewardship and contributions during a critical political period for matters of disarmament.

As we meet in the First Committee to consider disarmament and international security issues, we recognize the progress achieved over the past two years; we are also aware of the difficult times that we are facing and the severe challenges to multilateral disarmament endeavours.

Allow me now to address several specific issues. With respect to nuclear disarmament, all States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) committed themselves in 2000 to achieving nuclear disarmament, and all of us have accepted the 13 steps that were agreed upon to attain that objective. It should be noted in this connection that the commitment by the five nuclear-weapon States to pursue the elimination of their nuclear arsenals is both a legal and a moral commitment. That is why, on the basis of that commitment, Egypt and its partners in the New Agenda Coalition will be introducing two draft resolutions that address, inter alia, the need to reverse the laxity that has crept into global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation efforts since May 2000. The first, on agenda item 73 (d), is entitled "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: a new agenda" and the second, on item 73 (c), is "Reduction of non-strategic nuclear weapons". While they both convey a similar message in their operative paragraphs, the second stresses the need for reducing non-strategic nuclear weapons as an essential step towards ridding the world of nuclear weapons. In that respect, Egypt associates itself with the statement made by Ambassador Queiroz Duarte of Brazil on behalf of the countries of the New Agenda Coalition (see A/C.1/58/PV.2).

Among the more serious challenges to multilateral disarmament efforts are updated strategic doctrines that set out rationales for the retention, development, deployment and even possible use of nuclear weapons. The impasse encountered at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, which has raised questions in many people's minds about the future of the Conference itself, is a clear example of the magnitude of this challenge. The Egyptian delegation welcomes the new ideas that have been put forward during the past year with a view to reaching consensus on a possible 2004 agenda for the Conference on Disarmament. We hope that those efforts and viewpoints will achieve success, although we realize that there is a lack of political will among the members of the Conference and that the current crisis goes beyond procedural matters, because it reflects far deeper problems in the state of international relations and multilateralism regarding the maintenance of international peace and security.

With regard to international efforts in the field of non-proliferation, it is regrettable that this new session of the General Assembly was convened after a year during which the Middle East had witnessed what can be described as an unprecedented level of violence and escalation. Yet we have not seen any serious effort to address the risks of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East region, especially through securing universal adherence to the NPT there, an objective that we seek and that has the support of most Member States and countries party to the NPT.

The danger of nuclear proliferation and the achievement of universal adherence to the NPT in the Middle East region are policy priorities for Egypt. Egypt will continue its efforts to achieve that objective in the General Assembly through a draft resolution that calls for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, and through another that calls upon Israel, the only State in the Middle East that has not yet acceded to the NPT, to accede to the Treaty.

Also with respect to non-proliferation, we welcome Iran's stated willingness to cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which should enable the Agency's Director General to fulfil the mandate given him by the IAEA Board of Governors. We reaffirm that the non-proliferation regime must address the security concerns of all its members. Otherwise, it will not succeed, and will disintegrate.

Another issue equally pertinent to disarmament and multilateralism is that of missiles. I should also like to recall the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation. In our view, the credibility and success of that Code, or any other instrument, will largely depend on the final text of the Code, on its ability to be developed and on the degree of its success in dealing with issues pertinent to the debate on missiles in a balanced and objective manner.

With regard to small arms and light weapons, it is imperative that the United Nations Programme of Action, adopted in 2001, be fully implemented, first at the national level, after which it will be possible to

support regional and international efforts in that field. Furthermore, we welcome the successful outcome of the First Biennial Meeting, chaired by Ambassador Kuniko Inoguchi, Permanent Representative of Japan to the Conference on Disarmament, and held here in New York in July, to monitor progress in that respect. Her efforts and expertise contributed greatly to the success of the meeting.

In conclusion, the delegation of Egypt would like to emphasize the need to support United Nations activities in the field of disarmament in all its forms.

As for the reform of the work of the First Committee, this should take into consideration the need for a stable legal framework with regard to the responsibility of the General Assembly in matters of disarmament and international security. The international community should take great care in that respect to maintain the required balance in the United Nations role in the maintenance of international peace and security, as well as the required balance among the principal organs of the Organization. We would like to recall that the General Assembly plays a fundamental role in this reform effort, and it alone is capable of providing the necessary legitimacy.

Mr. Chidumo (Mozambique): Allow me at the outset to join previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your election to preside over the First Committee. I am confident that under your skilful guidance and outstanding leadership, our deliberations will be crowned with success. I would also like to extend my congratulations to the other members of the Bureau. I would like to take this opportunity to warmly congratulate Ambassador Abe upon his appointment as Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, and to assure him of my Government's full support in the discharge of his duties. I would further like to pay tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Chairman, for the excellent manner in which he conducted the deliberation of the Committee during the previous session of the General Assembly.

This year, we are commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the convening of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Instead of being able to hold a true celebration on such an important occasion, however, we find ourselves with every reason to be concerned about the prevailing situation in the field of disarmament. In fact, the Conference on Disarmament has yet to break the stalemate with regard to its programme of work, and substantive work and effective multilateral disarmament negotiations are therefore blocked.

This is very disturbing, particularly at a time when there is increased concern about the likelihood of weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of terrorists. This attests to the need for a strong multilateral system to promote disarmament and non-proliferation. The effectiveness of the multilateral system in the field of disarmament lies in the universalization and operationalization of existing multilateral agreements related to disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. In particular, every effort should be made to ensure the full implementation of the outcome of the 2000 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the full implementation of the Convention on Chemical Weapons, to mention just a few relevant multilateral disarmament agreements.

As a State party to the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, last year we reaffirmed to the Committee our country's commitment to conclude, by 2003, the process of destroying of all stockpiled mines, in accordance with the provisions of article 4 of that Convention.

In that regard, we are pleased to inform the Committee that in February this year Mozambique finalized the process of destroying those weapons. That process, which began in 2001 with the destruction of the first 500 mines, has resulted in the destruction of 37,818 stockpiled mines in Mozambique.

We are happy to note that at the Fifth Meeting of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention, held in Thailand in September, the parties reaffirmed their commitment to the total eradication of anti-personnel mines. We hope that, with concerted action by the international community, we will be able to achieve the ultimate goal of a world free from landmines. It is our hope that the First Review Conference, which is due to take place next year in Nairobi, will result in the adoption of meaningful recommendations which will address this issue in a comprehensive manner.

We are also happy to note that 141 States have so far acceded to the Convention. This represents a step forward towards the universalization of that important instrument. To this end, we urge Member States that have not yet acceded to the Convention to do so without delay.

The illicit trade in and proliferation of small arms and light weapons continues to pose a serious threat to peace, stability and social development in various parts of the world, particularly in the African continent. We are encouraged by the positive results of the First Biennial Meeting of States to consider the Implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in New York in July. It provided a unique opportunity for the States parties to exchange experiences about efforts being undertaken at the regional, national and international levels to achieve the noble goal of ending the illicit trade in those weapons throughout the world.

The multiplicity of challenges before the international community in general and the United Nations in particular compels the United Nations to undertake far-reaching reforms at all levels. In this regard, we welcome the ongoing efforts by the Secretary-General to launch a professional-level debate on this issue. As the issue of reform begins to have an impact on the affairs of the First Committee, my delegation stands ready to contribute to the successful outcome of the process.

The Chairman: Before giving the floor to the next speaker, I would like to remind delegations to show respect to those who are speaking. If urgent consultations need to take place, representatives should undertake such consultations in a respectful manner.

Ms. Rastovac (Serbia and Montenegro): At the outset, Sir, I would like to congratulate you, on behalf of my delegation, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. We are confident that your ample experience and professional skills will lead us to the successful outcome of the current session of the Committee. Let me assure you of my delegation's readiness to work closely with you to achieve this goal. I would also like to extend our congratulations to the other members of the Bureau.

The significance of the United Nations disarmament framework for peace and security in the world has never been more highlighted, particularly in view of the growing threat of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery and the possible acquisition of these types of weapons by terrorists. The link between the proliferation of these weapons, new forms of terrorism and transnational criminal networks poses a real threat to international peace and security, requiring a joint response by the international community.

The 11 September attack, followed by other terrorist attacks around the world, including the terrorist strike against the United Nations offices in Baghdad, directly challenges existing peace and security assumptions, particularly the strength of the disarmament framework.

The international community has at its disposal the means with which to counter these threats. However, their effectiveness will be shaped by our ability to improve the existing agreements on disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. To make these mechanisms more effective, we have to make certain that they are universal, fully implemented and coupled with a strong verification regime.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) represents the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime. It that respect, its further strengthening should be at the centre of our attention. We should strive to attain the universality of the NPT as a necessary measure for achieving its effectiveness. It is our conviction that. to attain the goals set forth in the NPT, full compliance with the Treaty's provisions is necessary. Serbia and Montenegro, as a State party to the Treaty, is committed to that aim.

We share the views, expressed in many statements during this general debate, that universal implementation of the International Atomic Energy Agency IAEA safeguards regime should be accorded top priority. At the start of 2002, the Safeguard Agreement with the IAEA was renewed in Serbia and Montenegro, enabling further strengthening of our cooperation with the Agency.

I would particularly like to draw your attention to the issue of safety of nuclear waste. Individual Member States should be supported in their efforts to deal with this issue by ensuring that adequate funds being made available to them. Serbia and Montenegro is taking the necessary steps, with the assistance of international partners, to find a long-term solution to the issue of nuclear waste.

We also support an early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). The process of ratification of the Treaty is underway in Serbia and Montenegro and will be completed in the near future.

There is a great threat that chemical substances may find their way into the hands of terrorists. In order to prevent this, we have to achieve full universality of the Chemical Weapons Convention. However, the greatest responsibility lies with the States parties to this Convention to fully implement it. Serbia and Montenegro has regularly submitted its reports to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). In 2003, we received five inspection teams. At the end of September, in cooperation with the OPCW, chemical weapons production equipment stored at the Trayal Corporation in Krusevac was destroyed.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express our satisfaction with the successful completion of the First Review Conference on the Chemical Weapons Convention, held recently in The Hague. The Political Declaration agreed to by consensus and other concrete decisions of member States of the OPCW represent major steps forward towards our common goal, the elimination of chemical weapons.

Serbia and Montenegro considers that full implementation and further strengthening of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention is a key prerequisite to adequately addressing the threat posed by the dissemination of biological agents or toxins. Successful outcome of the upcoming meeting of the States parties to this Convention will be of utmost importance for the advancement of the Convention's goals.

We also welcome the adoption of the International Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation. It is a major step towards strengthening the entire non-proliferation framework. We call on all Members States to subscribe to the Code.

The region of South-East Europe is facing serious challenges and threats caused by terrorism and organized crime. We consider that only the full integration of the countries of the region into European and Euro-Atlantic alliances and the further strengthening of regional cooperation, goals to which my country attaches paramount importance, will create the prerequisites to effectively deal with these security challenges.

Another problem that affects stability in our region is the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and its direct connection to organized crime and terrorism. We are of the view that if we seek to resolve this problem, we need to ensure the full implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons, particularly through strengthening export controls and regional and international cooperation. I would like to express our satisfaction with the successful results of the First Biennial Meeting of States on the Implementation of the Programme of Action of the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, which demonstrated a strong consensus among the States parties to advance their cooperation at all levels, as well as to undertake additional measures to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

We support the establishment of an open-ended working group to negotiate a legally binding instrument to enable States to identify and trace illicit small arms and light weapons, as recommended by the United Nations group of experts.

Serbia and Montenegro, as a State Party to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), fully supports the goals set out in the Convention. Furthermore, my country has adopted the legislation to accept the amendment to article 1 of the CCW and has accepted Protocol IV of the Convention.

In August 2003, my country deposited with the United Nations Secretary-General an instrument of ratification for the Ottawa Convention, thereby joining the family of nations seeking to eliminate landmines, a highly dangerous type of weapon that causes harm and loss of life to civilians. Landmines represent a grave problem to my country, in view of the fact that, according to the estimates, as many as 10 million square meters in Serbia and Montenegro are contaminated by mines. Therefore, we need financial assistance to address this issue in an adequate and timely fashion, since this problem has long-term humanitarian consequences.

In addition, we are cooperating with donor countries to deal with the issue of mine stockpiles. According to the official data, there are 1,322,641 mines in stockpiles in my country. A project is currently under way to destroy part of those stockpiles, but additional resources are necessary. We call upon the donor countries to extend financial support to this effort.

Let me conclude by expressing our support to your initiative to improve the efficiency of the work of the First Committee. We hope that, during the current session of the Committee, we shall be able to jointly find a way to improve its work, so that it can respond more efficiently to the new challenges that the international community is facing today in the field of disarmament and international security.

Ms. Taguiang (Philippines): We join other delegations in congratulating you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee and we also congratulate the other members of your Bureau. The Philippine delegation is confident that your vast experience will guide this year's work of the First Committee to a productive and meaningful conclusion.

May we also take this opportunity to welcome to the First Committee the new Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Nobuyasu Abe. The Philippine delegation is convinced that Under-Secretary-General Abe will continue the efforts of his predecessor, Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, in furthering the cause of disarmament and international security.

My delegation associates itself with the statement of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, to be delivered subsequently by the delegation of Myanmar, and would now just like to briefly refer to points of national interest in our statement.

The Philippines shares the concern of other delegations about the lack of progress in the multilateral arena of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We are particularly concerned about the following points.

First, there is the difficulty of moving on with nuclear disarmament under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We note that three years after the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT, the collective and unequivocal commitment of nuclear-weapon States to the transparent, accountable and verifiable elimination of their nuclear arsenals remains largely unrealized. The decision of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to withdraw from the NPT and restart its nuclear weapons development programme is a further cause for concern.

Our second concern involves the failure of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) to enter into force despite its ratification by a growing number of countries. The Philippines reiterates its call on States that have still not done so — particularly those whose ratification is needed for the Treaty to enter into force — to sign and ratify the Treaty as soon as possible.

Our third concern is about the unsuccessful efforts in the Conference of Disarmament to arrive at an agreement on its programme of work for the past seven years, which has stalled negotiations on such important disarmament issues as a fissile material cut-off treaty.

Our fourth concern has to do with the continued lack of consensus, despite the discussions held over the years in the Disarmament Commission, on the objectives and agenda for the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. It is indeed lamentable that there has been no progress in arriving at consensus to move ahead with the convening of the special session.

Those concerns in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation have further been aggravated by the growing possibility of terrorist actions that may involve the use of weapons of mass destruction.

The realities I have cited may seem daunting, but they should not prevent us from effectively pursuing our work in the First Committee. The Philippines remains convinced that for us to respond effectively to those concerns, we would need to strengthen negotiations in the multilateral sphere. We also reiterate our view that by focusing on a common end, we narrow the differences in our approaches.

The Philippines remains steadfast in its commitment to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. As part of that commitment, the Philippines signed, in April 2003 at Vienna, a facility agreement with the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization. The agreement governs the operation and maintenance of our contribution of three facilities to the international monitoring system.

In April of this year, the Philippines also held a seminar on chemical weapons prevention, which was led by representatives of the Organization for the Prevention of Chemical Weapons. As a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Philippines is about to begin the process of enacting implementing national legislation for the Convention.

Last year, the Philippines also subscribed to The Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile

Proliferation. The Philippines shares the view of other subscribing States to the Code of Conduct that the Code is a step towards the integration of ballistic missiles in the area of multilateral non-proliferation and disarmament.

The Philippines will also continue to work hand in hand with our partners in the Association of South-East Asian Nations to pursue consultations with the nuclear-weapon States to ensure the effective implementation of the South-East Asia nuclear-weapon-free zone. The Philippines also supports the efforts to create a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia, which it views as a positive development in regional arms control and disarmament.

Weapons of mass destruction are not the only threats to international peace and security. The world is equally threatened by the proliferation of other deadly weapons, specifically small arms and light weapons and landmines. The proliferation and uncontrolled spread of those weapons pose a serious threat to peace, security and safety, especially for developing countries' sustained economic growth and development. The illicit trafficking in those weapons has also led to armed conflict in many parts of the world, adversely affecting millions of innocent civilians, most of them women and children.

In that regard, the Philippines considers as a step in the right direction the Programme of Action adopted in 2001 by the Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. The Philippines participated actively in the First Biennial Meeting of States on the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which was held last July. During that meeting, we stressed the need for closer linkages between national implementation, regional initiatives and global action to ensure meaningful implementation of the Programme of Action.

One of the major steps undertaken by the Philippines in addressing the problem of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons is the sustained enhancement of our stockpile-management capabilities. The Philippines also has in place specific regulations that not only serve as effective tools in addressing that concern but which also substantially conform to the Programme of Action.

The Philippines is also creating safety nets to protect children from the adverse effects of illicit small arms and light weapons. As part of that long-term strategy to address the humanitarian costs and consequences of small arms proliferation, my country is undertaking a comprehensive programme for children in armed conflict.

Finally, the Philippines shares the view of many delegations about the need for comprehensive reform in the United Nations. While we support efforts aimed at reinvigorating both the General Assembly and the First Committee to allow them to respond more effectively and more efficiently to the challenges that confront us now and that we will have in the future, we also believe that existing commitments already in place in the areas of disarmament and international security should be respected.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): Although I feel a little marginalized here, it is a great pleasure to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. We are confident that, under your able guidance, the Committee will achieve optimum results. You can count on our cooperation. I also take this opportunity to express Pakistan's sincere appreciation for Uganda's skilful guidance of the Committee last year. We welcome the appointment of Mr. Nobuyasu Abe, the new Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, and we assure him of our full cooperation in promoting the agreed goals of disarmament.

The Committee's debate on disarmament is taking place at a difficult moment for the promotion of peace and security. First, there has been serious erosion in the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, particularly as regards the use or threat of use of force. Secondly, the concept of "equal security", which was approved at the first special session devoted to disarmament and which flows from the concept of the sovereign equality of States, has been severely damaged. Asymmetry in power and wealth is growing, reinforcing the tendency of the more powerful States to resort to the use of force and the tendency of the weak to respond with asymmetric means.

Equal security was to be promoted primarily through general and complete disarmament, both in the conventional and the non-conventional spheres. The non-proliferation of nuclear weapons was an interim measure, with the ultimate aim of complete nuclear disarmament. Chemical weapons and biological

weapons were to be totally banned. And conventional armaments were to be controlled, especially in the regional context.

Those objectives have been perverted, if not subverted. General and complete disarmament is today dismissed as utopian. Nuclear disarmament is given lip service, especially at the review conferences of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). But, in practice, the nuclear-weapon States display no intention of giving up their nuclear weapons, now or at any time in the foreseeable future. Thousands of nuclear weapons are retained, and new war-fighting nuclear weapons are being developed.

The non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction has become the primary and urgent goal; but it is pursued selectively. Some States cannot pursue peaceful nuclear cooperation, while others are helped in promoting unsafeguarded nuclear programmes, building and refining missile and anti-missile systems and allowed to accelerate vertical nuclear proliferation, including in regions of tension.

While real nuclear threats — the existence of dangerous disputes among nuclear-armed States — are being ignored, an attempt is being made to focus attention on the possible danger of weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of non-State actors and terrorist groups.

Military expenditure has meanwhile increased. According to the latest Stockholm International Peace Research Institute report, the current level of world military expenditure is 14 per cent higher in real terms than it was at the post-cold war low of 1998. Huge and aggressive military arsenals are being built up by a few States — often working in collaboration — while weaker States are often coerced to disarm and give up the potential for the development of any credible means of self-defence.

The Conference on Disarmament and other disarmament mechanisms are paralysed — not because of the intransigence of the non-aligned countries, but because some major Powers are unwilling to allow negotiations to be opened on the issues of highest priority — that is, nuclear disarmament. Nor are they willing to address present and future threats to global security emanating from the development of new war-fighting nuclear weapons; the development and deployment of anti-ballistic missiles systems; and the ongoing weaponization of outer space. They are willing to negotiate only on issues that they see as threatening their own security: the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and missile capabilities — and on those issues, too, they make exceptions for and give special treatment to their own allies and strategic partners.

A huge legal and political dichotomy has emerged in the area of nuclear non-proliferation. While the NPT recognizes only five nuclear-weapon States, there are, today, actually eight — if not nine — nuclear-weapon States. That dichotomy needs to be resolved. It can be resolved only in the context of a process of nuclear disarmament by all nuclear-weapon States.

Non-proliferation can succeed only if the underlying security concerns of States are effectively addressed. As we have seen in recent days, unilateral and selective efforts to impose nuclear non-proliferation have resulted in the exacerbation of the proliferation threat, heightened tensions in the regions concerned and the increased danger of the use of force.

Presumptions — based on questionable intelligence information — about the possession by Iraq of weapons of mass destruction, for example, have proved to be unfounded so far, demonstrating the danger of the doctrine of pre-emptive and coercive non-proliferation.

Unfortunately, such realities are not reflected in the assessments and prescriptions proposed by the major Powers, by the New Agenda Coalition, or even by the United Nations.

It seems essential, therefore, to evolve a new consensus with regard to the entire gamut of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation issues, based on the principles of the Charter and global agreements, especially the Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to Disarmament. A partial and self-centred agenda imposed by the major Powers is a recipe for increased international insecurity and continued deadlock in disarmament negotiations.

The best approach to disarmament and non-proliferation today, as in the past, would include the following elements. First, internationally agreed non-discriminatory treaties and agreements should be negotiated, their observance being promoted through specific mechanisms designed for that purpose. Secondly, the underlying security concerns of States — concerns that motivate them to seek weapons of mass

destruction and other advanced weapons system — should be removed. Thirdly, the disarmament of weapons of mass destruction and missiles should be promoted, through cooperation, by the militarily significant States, working simultaneously to achieve equitable non-proliferation. Fourthly, incentives — not just disincentives — should be provided for the acceptance and implementation of non-proliferation obligations.

Pakistan reluctantly acquired a nuclear weapon and missile capability in order to deter aggression from our traditional adversary, India, only after India had acquired and tested its nuclear weapons and declared itself a nuclear-weapon State. It is not in Pakistan's strategic interest to allow the spread of nuclear weapons to other countries.

We share the concern that the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction could destabilize the global security environment, especially in certain sensitive regions of the world. Pakistan is prepared to work as a partner in halting proliferation. However, unreasonable demands, such as those relating to the implementation of Security Council resolution 1172 (1998) — which was adopted without our participation — while the existing nuclear-weapon States retain their nuclear weapons, are unacceptable and unrealistic. Pakistan's special strategic compulsions — especially the threat from our neighbour, India — need to be understood and accommodated.

While the situation in South Asia is different, Pakistan has committed itself not to erode the basic goals of the NPT. We would be prepared to give an explicit commitment that Pakistan will continue to act in conformity with the obligations undertaken by the nuclear-weapon States under articles I, II and III of the NPT so as to prevent any further nuclear proliferation.

Consistent with its obligations as a nuclear-weapon State, since February 2000 Pakistan has formally instituted an elaborate nuclear command and control mechanism so as to put in place ironclad custodial controls. The National Command Authority, chaired by the President, oversees these custodial controls of all assets, including strategic weapon components and fissile material. Those controls are aimed at ensuring the total elimination of the risks of leakages of either material or technology, and at preventing accidental or unauthorized launch. A Strategic Command Force, established in each of the three armed services, ensures that our strategic weapons are never used unintentionally, accidentally or without due authorization. Further special security and safety measures have also been adopted to prevent the mischievous seizure of those assets and to make it impossible for any of them to fall into the wrong hands. We are fully prepared to deal with multidimensional threats to our strategic assets at any cost.

Pakistan is a party to the international conventions banning chemical and biological weapons. We are committed to fulfilling our obligations under those conventions fully and faithfully.

Pakistan believes that the implementation of the obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention should be achieved through the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in The Hague. For Pakistan, a major priority is to secure the verified destruction of the chemical weapons which India declared when it ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention. Until India's stocks of chemical weapons are destroyed, Pakistan will need to factor the threat of a chemical weapon attack into any conflict with India. Pakistan also continues to cooperate with international efforts to control the destructive flow of chemical weapons and their precursors.

Arrangements to verify the ban on biological weapons have not been formalized, despite best efforts by States parties. We are willing to work with the concerned States to develop agreed and non-discriminatory means, consistent with the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, to prevent the clandestine development of biological weapons by any State. However, we do not believe that such verification responsibilities for weapons of mass destruction should be entrusted to the Security Council, because its functions relate mainly to the maintenance of peace and security, and because the rights and obligations of States in the Council are unequal between the five permanent members and other States. Such an effort would undermine the credibility of existing treaty regimes. We should work instead to strengthen disarmament treaties and, where necessary, to improve their verification mechanisms, including compliance with those treaties.

Pakistan also shares global concerns regarding unrestrained ballistic missile proliferation. We are willing to cooperate in developing universally negotiated, non-discriminatory measures to avert

missile proliferation. We have noted independent initiatives, such as the International Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation, taken on the issue of missiles. A considerable number of so-called missile-active States are still outside its fold. Pakistan cannot accept discriminatory restraints, especially those not accepted by our neighbour India or those which would prevent Pakistan from ensuring the credibility of our deterrence posture.

Pakistan understands concerns regarding the threat of acquisition by terrorist groups of weapons of mass destruction. In that context, the universal acceptance and implementation of the International Atomic Energy Agency's Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material is important. Programmes to ensure protection of "loose nukes" and of inadequately protected fissile materials are useful. Pakistan has taken all possible national measures to ensure the safety and security of our nuclear and missile assets. We are prepared to participate in the elaboration of internationally agreed measures to prevent terrorists from gaining access to weapons of mass destruction. Pakistan therefore proposes the convening of a meeting of technical experts dealing with weapons of mass destruction to evaluate the reality of this alleged threat.

Our deliberations should also focus on the fact that the threat of terrorists' acquiring chemical and biological weapons is relatively much greater than the threat of their acquiring nuclear weapons. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons can be strengthened to address the chemical-weapon threat. On biological weapons, special arrangements could be considered pending finalization of a multilateral agreement.

Pakistan desires an early resumption of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament, the sole multilateral forum mandated to negotiate and conclude, on the basis of consensus, legally binding arms control and disarmament instruments that contribute to the maintenance of peace and security at the minimum level of armaments, on the basis of undiminished and equal security for all States. The following four issues, in our view, should constitute the core agenda of the Conference on Disarmament.

The first issue is nuclear disarmament. Negotiations on that priority item cannot be frozen out of the Conference on Disarmament's work programme indefinitely. The nuclear-weapon States of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) are committed to the elimination of nuclear weapons. That commitment needs to be operationalized.

The second issue is that outer space must be effectively insulated from an arms race and from weapons of mass destruction. Negotiations on that issue are also important to remove the current gridlock in the Conference on Disarmament.

The third issue is the conclusion of a universal, comprehensive, non-discriminatory and verifiable fissile material treaty which will be an instrument of both nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

The fourth issue is the conclusion of a legally binding international instrument on negative security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States. Such an instrument could be another confidence-building measure in providing credible guarantees against the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

In the event that other issues are brought into the negotiating work programme of the Conference on Disarmament, Pakistan will seek priority for conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels. The General Assembly has repeatedly asked the Conference on Disarmament to formulate principles that can serve as a framework for regional agreements on conventional arms control. We are encouraged to note that the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects is in the process of implementation. We are also encouraged to see that the work within the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons is progressing satisfactorily.

We appreciate the desire and interest of the international community with regard to preserving and strengthening peace and security between Pakistan and India. Pakistan has proposed the adoption of a strategic restraint regime for South Asia, compromising three interlocking elements: first, agreed and reciprocal measures for nuclear and missile restraint to prevent deliberate or accidental use of nuclear weapons; secondly, the establishment of a conventional arms balance as a confidence-building measure between the two countries; and thirdly, the establishment of a political mechanism for resolving bilateral conflicts, especially the core dispute over Jammu and Kashmir.

It should be a matter of grave concern to the international community that there is no operational

understanding between India and Pakistan for the management of their nuclear relations. India has announced — and is steadily implementing — its dangerous nuclear doctrine envisaging the development and deployment of a triad of nuclear weapons on land and sea and in the air. The Prithvi short-range missile has been deployed; the Agni series of medium-range missiles is in the process of being deployed. The Brahmos naval cruise missiles and nuclear-capable submarines being acquired by India will create a second-strike capability. While professing adherence to a policy of no first use of nuclear weapons, India's doctrine provides that, "in the event of a major attack against India, or Indian forces anywhere, by biological or chemical weapons, India will retain the option of retaliating with nuclear weapons". The acquisition of anti-ballistic-missile systems and of advanced early-warning systems — such as the Israeli-supplied Phalcon — will increase India's first-strike options.

Pakistan does not wish to enter into a nuclear or strategic arms race with India. But we shall take all necessary measures to ensure the credibility of our strategic deterrence against any use or threat of use of force against our territory or our strategic assets or facilities.

To preserve the stability of strategic deterrence in South Asia, Pakistan's proposals for reciprocal nuclear and missile restraint deserve urgent consideration. Those proposals include: first, a bilateral moratorium on further nuclear-weapons testing; second, maintenance of nuclear weapons on a de-alert status — as a matter of policy, Pakistan does not presently keep its missiles mated with nuclear warheads; third, non-deployment of nuclear-capable ballistic missiles; fourth, formalization of the understanding to provide prior adequate notification of missile flight tests; fifth, acceptance of a moratorium on the acquisition and deployment of anti-ballistic-missile systems; sixth, other confidence-building measures to reduce the risk of the use of nuclear weapons by miscalculation or accident; and seventh, discussion of each other's nuclear security doctrines to avoid a regional nuclear and missile arms race.

The second element of the strategic restraint regime that we have proposed is the maintenance of a balance in conventional weapons. India's defence budget has increased almost 100 per cent over the past five years, while Pakistan's has remained frozen. India's arms purchases will amount to more than $100 billion over the next few years. The provision of certain advanced weapons systems to India — such as Patriot-3 anti-missile systems, the Israeli Phalcon airborne early warning aircraft and Green Pine radar and Russian nuclear submarines and an aircraft carrier — threatens to erode the conventional balance. We urge India's arms suppliers to exercise self-restraint.

A conventional arms imbalance will increase the threat of Indian aggression against Pakistan. Indian political and military leaders already talk about limited war, hot pursuit and pre-emptive strikes against Pakistan. Almost all of India's military forces of more than 1.5 million people and all its military assets are deployed permanently against Pakistan. A conventional imbalance will also lower the nuclear threshold in South Asia.

Pakistan proposes the following reciprocal measures in the conventional field to preserve strategic stability: first, the maintenance of an acceptable ratio in the armed forces of India and Pakistan; second, restrictions on the introduction of heavy weapons within certain border zones; third, further limits on the size and deployments in military exercises; fourth, explicit renunciation of dangerous concepts like limited war, surgical strikes, or hot pursuit; fifth, ensuring that neither country has the capacity to launch surprise attacks; sixth, an understanding on non-deployment of ballistic missiles; seventh, non-acquisition of weapons systems that could destabilize the strategic balance in the region, especially missile defences; and eighth, an eventual agreement on the non-use of force or a non-aggression pact.

Finally, for durable peace in South Asia, it is imperative that a serious and sustained political dialogue be conducted in a composite fashion to resolve the underlying causes of conflict and confrontation. An early solution to the Jammu and Kashmir dispute holds the key to peace and security in South Asia. On 24 September, in the General Assembly, President Musharraf of Pakistan proposed an action plan for peace between India and Pakistan — including the opening of a bilateral dialogue; a reciprocal ceasefire along the Line of Control; cessation of violence within Indian-occupied Kashmir by Indian forces and Kashmiri freedom fighters; enhanced monitoring of the Line of Control on both sides; and the maintenance of a balance of arms, both conventional and unconventional, between the two countries. Unfortunately, India summarily rejected Pakistan's action plan. For peace, we hope that India would yet reflect and respond

positively to the constructive proposals of the President of Pakistan.

The international community must encourage such a positive response for the sake of justice and human rights of the Kashmiri people, for the sake of peace and security in South Asia and for the sake of the noble goals of global disarmament and non-proliferation.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Mr. Paclisanu (International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)): The recent Fifth Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, in Bangkok, provides an inspiring example of the potential for addressing arms issues multilaterally when clear issues of life and death are being considered and efforts are deeply rooted in international humanitarian law.

The Bangkok meeting brought together most of the 136 States parties to the Convention, as well as nearly all major mine-affected countries and all major organizations involved in clearance, mine awareness, victim assistance and advocacy around the world. On top of this, it also gathered a considerable number of States not yet parties to the Convention, particularly from the Asian region. The successes of the Convention are evident. According to the 2003 Landmine Monitor Report, 30 million mines have been destroyed by States parties; stockpile destruction deadlines were met by all States whose deadlines had elapsed; a massive reduction of mine casualties has been achieved where the Convention is being implemented; and a high level of political and resource mobilization is continuing to ensure that the job is completed.

Adherence in the past year by Afghanistan and Angola, two of the most mine ravaged countries, and by Greece, Turkey and Belarus — the last of which possesses some 4.5 million anti-personnel mines — were significant steps on the path to universalization.

Parties to the Convention also addressed future challenges and began laying the basis for a successful Review Conference in Nairobi in December 2004. Mine-affected States were urged to present, before the Review Conference, plans, priorities and needs assessments for implementing mine action programmes within the Convention deadlines. All parties were called upon to prepare plans, before the Review Conference, for the sustained mobilization of resources. The need for increased resources, particularly to fulfil the Convention's promises to landmine victims, was highlighted. The International Committee of the Red Cross commends States parties to the Convention for this impressive record and calls on all States that are not yet parties to consider adherence to the Convention before the 2004 Review Conference.

The ever-growing global problem of explosive remnants of war deserves equally committed and urgent action by the international community. Next month's negotiations on a new international instrument in the context of the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons will be a crucial test of States' commitment to reducing the unacceptable levels of post-conflict death and injury from explosive remnants of war. The ICRC urges States parties to come to these negotiations prepared to conclude a legally-binding protocol that will include strong and effective obligations to clear, or assist in the clearance of, explosive remnants of war, to provide the information needed by organizations conducting clearance or risk — education programmes, to warn civilians of the presence of explosive remnants of war and to provide assistance to victims. The protocol should also promote, in our view, the adoption of measures to minimize the problem in future conflicts, including technical measures to prevent munitions from becoming explosive remnants of war and correct practices for the handling and transport of munitions.

Recent armed conflicts have demonstrated the urgency of the problem of explosive remnants of war. Each new conflict adds years, if not decades, to the burden of clearance and diverts resources needed to address the already overwhelming problems of currently affected areas. The human costs of remnants of war will continue to escalate as the means to deliver huge quantities of munitions proliferate. States parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons must take the opportunity of the November negotiations to stop and reverse that trend. The world cannot afford the costs of the ever-increasing burden of explosive remnants of war. New generations of victims must not pay the price with their lives or limbs because of a lack of consensus on how to proceed or because of a weak instrument.

The unregulated availability of arms, in particular small arms and light weapons, remains a continuing

concern for the ICRC. As we have stated previously, the implications for civilian populations, for respect for international humanitarian law and for the delivery of humanitarian assistance are grave. The recent First Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons highlighted not only the important work that has begun nationally, regionally and internationally, but also the need for more effective action. We urge all States to enact measures to ensure that their arms transfer laws and policies take into account respect for international humanitarian law. We also encourage States to focus more closely on the elements of the United Nations Programme of Action which address the demand for and use of small arms, including through measures such as the training of those who bear arms in international humanitarian law.

The ICRC launched its Appeal on Biotechnology, Weapons and Humanity a year ago. While we fully recognize the huge potential of biotechnology, we have doubled our efforts to raise awareness of the increasing risks it may pose for international norms against poisoning and the deliberate spread of disease. Our outreach has extended to the scientific and medical communities, the biotechnology and pharmaceutical industries, parliaments and the general public. Our work with Governments has included a written contribution to the August meeting of the Group of Governmental Experts established by the States parties to the Biological Weapons Convention, and consultations hosted by our President on a proposed ministerial declaration on preventing the use of biological agents for hostile purposes. Such a high-level political declaration would reaffirm existing norms, reinforce efforts within the Biological Weapons Convention framework and highlight the responsibilities of science and industry. It would also support a variety of preventive actions commensurate with the risks posed by rapidly developing capacities for misuse of biological agents. We invite all interested delegations to contact us with regard to these efforts.

Finally, in December the 28th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent will bring together all the States parties to the Geneva Conventions and all national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, as well as their International Federation and the International Committee of the Red Cross. One of the four main subjects to be considered will be arms and international humanitarian law, including all of the issues to which I have referred today.

We believe that the arms issues proposed for consideration are of particular urgency. They highlight the relevance of international humanitarian law and relate to fields in which action by the International Conference can make a real difference. Success in the elaboration of the Conference's Agenda for Humanitarian Action in the arms field will depend upon the capacity of all participants to consider these issues, not only from a pure arms control perspective, but also from the viewpoint of the victims, who, most frequently, happen to be civilians. It will challenge us to consider arms issues in the light of the interests of humanity as a whole and in view of the universal responsibility to protect human dignity. We look forward to working with the Committee in this effort.

The Chairman: We have concluded the first week of our general debate on all disarmament and related international security agenda items.

Mr. Sanders (Netherlands): I took the floor on Wednesday at 11.30 a.m. on the issue of the better use of the time available to this Committee. I commend your efforts, Mr. Chairman, to make sure that the speakers' lists for each day are as full as possible. Thanks to the Ambassador of Pakistan, who took considerable time, we have managed to make the meeting last until noon. However, an hour will still be wasted.

I still do not fully understand the mechanics. If we have 100 speakers and spread them out evenly over 10 meetings, allowing 10 minutes for each, then something is wrong; each day time will have been allocated that is not used. If we do the arithmetic in that way, we will end up with incomplete meetings.

I have noted that we had no full days scheduled this week, the argument being that we were meeting back to back with the Fourth Committee. I have not seen many Fourth Committee meetings this week. I wonder, therefore, why the available afternoons could not have been put to use.

Of course, if there is a concrete rule that we must meet for two weeks for the general debate and that that period cannot be shortened, then we will evenly spread out the number of statements to be made. But many of us have delegations from our capitals and from Geneva of five people exclusively dedicated to the First Committee, who would like to put their time to good use.

I would like next week, when we discuss the efficiency of the Committee's work, to reiterate these points. For the time being, I repeat that I am disappointed that we are going to waste another hour now, because I felt, Mr. Chairman, that you were in the process of wrapping up the meeting.

The Chairman: The secretariat has been making repeated attempts to invite delegations to move their statements forward. We were successful yesterday with three delegations and today with one delegation. The International Committee of the Red Cross was also kind enough to make its statement today.

Unfortunately, we remain in the hands of Member States for this flexibility. As I noted yesterday, delegations whose statements are made by representatives from Geneva can devote themselves full-time to the proceedings of the First Committee. This is somewhat easier than for New York-based delegations, whose Permanent Representatives have a hectic schedule, making statements not only in the First Committee, but in the plenary and maybe other Committees as well. We will continue to make efforts so that next week we can make full use of the resources available to the Committee.

As things stand, we most likely do not need Friday for the general debate. It is also likely that on Thursday there will be very few speakers, in which case, hopefully, we will have full meetings on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, and on Thursday we can start with a short formal meeting and then go immediately into the informal mode to start our informal exchange of views on our work. I again wish to reassure the representative of the Netherlands that every effort is being made in this regard.

As regards our back-to-back meetings with the Fourth Committee, I note that the Fourth Committee will be meeting this afternoon. It did not meet yesterday afternoon, and unfortunately I am not privy to the reasons. This is one of the issues that can be discussed exhaustively next week.

As I mentioned at our organizational meeting on Monday last week, the possibility of the First and Fourth Committees meeting sequentially, rather than back-to-back, morning and afternoon, would be one issue to discuss. I hope that delegations will come to our meeting next week with fresh ideas in this regard. I do not want to in any way pre-empt next week's discussion, or prejudge its outcome. But, in my General Assembly practitioner's view, it would be possible to deal with our back-to-back work with the Fourth Committee as follows.

Should the First Committee continue to wish to begin its work on the Monday immediately following the conclusion of the General Assembly general debate, we might envisage a timetable whereby we could meet full-time, morning and afternoon, for one week. This would of course mean that, provided no new conference resources were placed at the Main Committees' disposal, the Fourth Committee would have to start a week later than is the case currently. It would then be the only Main Committee of the General Assembly to start a week late. At that point, in the light of our own work and the need for some space to be left for proper consultations among delegations, we could maybe meet the way we are meeting currently, back-to-back.

As I said, I do not want to prejudge next week's meeting in any way. What I have said is simply to highlight one practical issue for discussion and a possible practical solution, on which, of course, we will have to consult not only within this Committee but also with our colleagues from the Fourth Committee. We shall also need to make sure that this is doable in terms of conference services.

I hope that I have been able to provide an answer to the representative of the Netherlands.

Mr. Sanders (Netherlands): Mr. Chairman, to a certain extent you have. But I understand that, historically, the First Committee starts its work in the week after the general debate in the General Assembly, while other Committees, including the Fourth, can start their debates in the same week as the general debate in the General Assembly ends. That is what I have been told by people who have been in New York for a very long time. So the Fourth Committee could start earlier than the First Committee and clear a number of its meetings before the First Committee has even convened, because it is a tradition that the First Committee starts after the general debate in the General Assembly. That is another consideration that we might take into account when we discuss back-to-back matters.

I know, Mr. Chairman, that you are committed to making the best use of our time; what I said was not meant as a criticism of you. But we need to look thoroughly at the system and how it works, certainly in the week before the meetings, when their framework is being made and when speakers are allocated to certain

time slots, either in the first week or the second week. Maybe they could all be accommodated in the first week; if Permanent Representatives in New York knew this in a timely manner, they could take this into account when they drew up their calendars. But maybe they had the choice of the second week, which might not even have been necessary.

But let us not make a point of this at this stage, although we have sufficient time — we have until 1 o'clock. Let us keep this point in mind when we discuss the more efficient functioning of this Committee, hopefully, by the end of next week.

The Chairman: As there are no more speakers on this issue, I shall make some comments about next week's work.

First, I remind all delegations that the deadline for submission of draft resolutions under all disarmament and international security agenda items is 6 p.m. on Wednesday, 15 October. Delegations are urged to kindly submit their draft resolutions as soon as possible, in order to enable the secretariat to make them available as official documents of the Committee in all six official languages for the second phase of its work.

As regards the preparation for the second phase of the Committee's work — the thematic discussion on item subjects and the introduction and consideration of draft resolutions — I plan to provide the Committee with an indicative timetable for the structured discussion of specific subjects as soon as possible, following consultations with my fellow Bureau members later today.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.